League of Oregon Cities

Oregon Municipal Policy

Discussion Draft October 2026

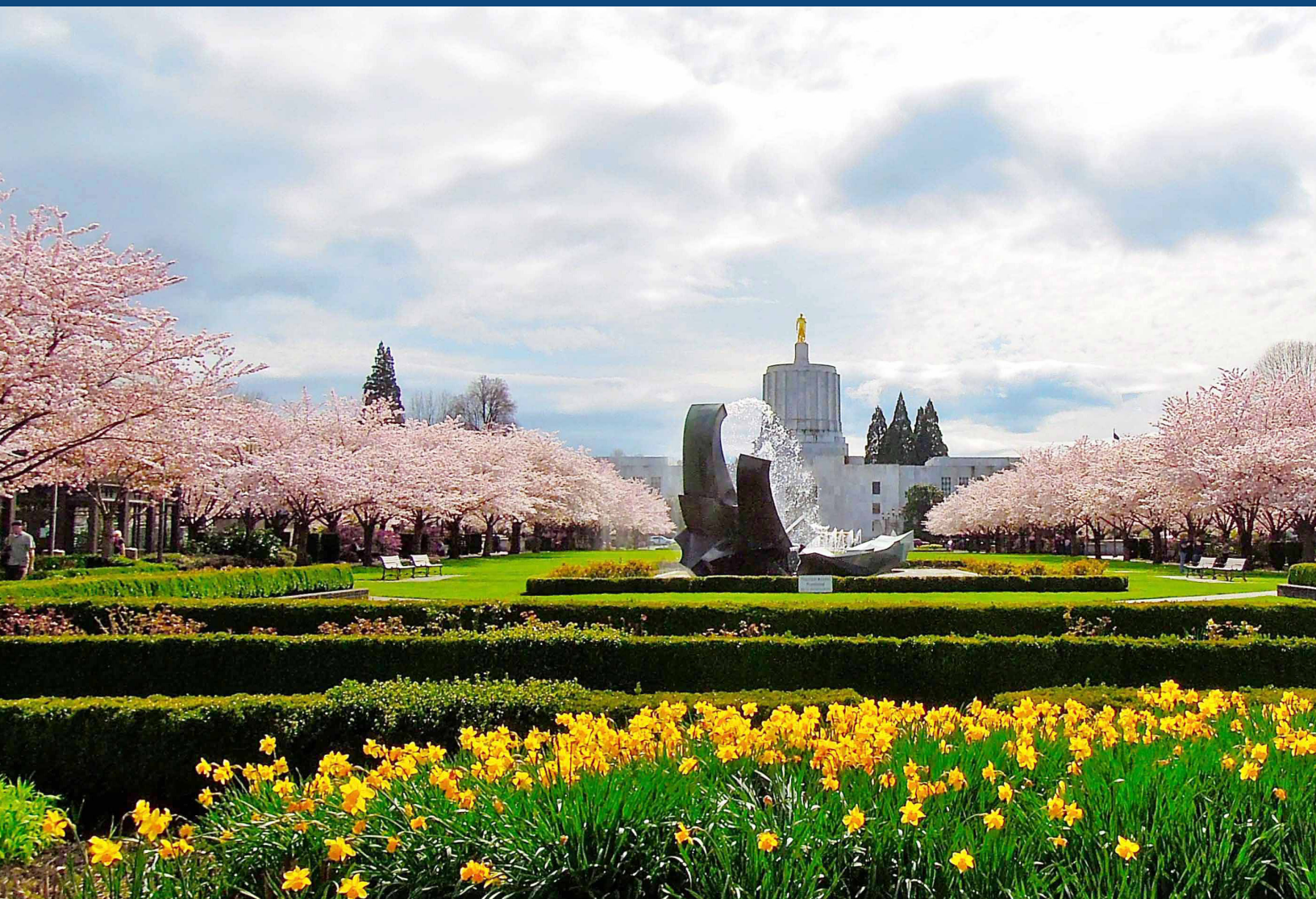


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About the League

The League of Oregon Cities (LOC) is the essential and trusted partner for local, state, federal, and community leaders in developing policy and legislation to empower Oregon's cities through collaboration, advocacy, training, and sharing best practices. The LOC supports its 241 member cities in creating thriving communities that are equitable, healthy, and safe.

As the government closest to the people, cities have the best understanding of the needs of Oregonians. Cities strive to meet those needs through community-based decision-making with collaborative partnerships with the state and other local governments. Actions of federal and state governments impact cities' ability to create thriving communities.

The Oregon Municipal Policy defines how the LOC advances the goals of cities and protects the local authority and resources that cities rely on to best serve their residents. This document is a north star for the LOC's advocacy efforts, following core principles that underscore how the LOC takes policy positions – at the federal and state level, with legislation and administrative rulemaking and actions. This document outlines values and understanding of specific policy areas and describes the LOC's process in taking positions and prioritizing advocacy efforts.







CORE PRINCIPLES

Defending Home Rule

Democracy functions best when decisions are made as close to the people as possible. The wisdom of this idea was enshrined in Article XI, Section 2 of the Oregon Constitution. It is also an expectation of Oregonians; city government is frequently the first place community members turn to advance their community vision or address challenges they face. The LOC will oppose efforts that undermine home rule authority.

Preventing Unfunded Mandates

Programs and regulations mandated by the state or federal government stretch the already limited financial resources of cities. These costs, if not compensated by the state or federal government, prevent cities from addressing needs and priorities. The LOC will oppose unfunded mandates and seek cost recovery or reimbursements for expanded requirements.

Advancing Partnerships

Communities are best served when officials of federal, state and local government (including municipalities, counties, special districts and school districts) respect the essential roles of each entity and work toward common solutions. The LOC is invested in building and maintaining collaborative working relationships among cities, other local governments, tribes, state government, and federal government. This means the LOC actively and constructively engages with stakeholders to discuss and develop policies addressing matters of regional, statewide, and national concern. The LOC works to ensure that all cities, regardless of size, resources, or geography, are treated as equal partners in formulating policy and funding decisions that impact them.

Representing all Members' Needs

The LOC exists to advance the collective strength, viability, and authority of its member cities. Guided by objective and informed analysis, the LOC must engage in thoughtful, balanced decision-making that considers every region of the state. In taking policy positions, legislative stances, or public advocacy, the LOC will refrain from actions that target, penalize, or directly impair the essential governance or fiscal health of any individual member city. If a policy has divergent impacts on cities, the LOC will weigh the net impact on municipal governance as a whole, striving to maximize collective strength while minimizing targeted detriment. An organizational stance never precludes an individual member city from expressing its own distinct position, nor will any member be penalized for advocating its unique municipal interests. In every policy position, the LOC will consider the needs of all Oregon cities.







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Policy Statements

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Cities serve their communities through open, accountable, and transparent governance. To serve their communities effectively, cities require the local authority, flexibility, and balanced financial resources to manage operations, raise revenue, and deliver services. Responsible stewardship relies on modern accounting and human resource practices to mitigate risk and liability, paired with fair, competitive public contracting laws that balance equity with administrative efficiency.

The LOC will:

Access & Transparency

- Support state public meeting laws that foster transparency and community trust while ensuring regulations are practical, preserve elected officials' ability to engage residents, and keep administrative burdens on city organizations rather than volunteer leaders.
- Limit regulatory and reporting burdens while taking advantage of opportunities to reduce existing burdens.
- Champion clear, practical ethics regulations that promote transparency, accountability, and public integrity while ensuring compliance remains accessible and administratively feasible for local governments.
- Streamline the state and federal rulemaking processes to ensure involvement and influence for cities.
- Support efforts to provide access to public records without increasing city administrative burden.

Finance

- Advocate for a sustainable municipal finance system that provides cities with stable, adequate, and flexible resources to deliver essential services, maintain critical infrastructure, and meet the needs of their constituents.
- Oppose actions that reduce, redistribute, restrict, or otherwise undermine financial resources cities rely on to provide essential services and meet community needs.
- Support reforms that address structural cost pressures that threaten the long-term sustainability of city budgets.
- Support state and federal investments in cities that recognize local governments as essential partners in achieving shared policy goals and provide resources commensurate with the costs borne by local governments.
- Promote funding programs, grants, financing tools, and administrative requirements that reflect the differing fiscal, operational, and staffing capacities of Oregon's cities.
- Support policies that limit higher insurance premiums and reduce city liability.

Good Governance

- Encourage participation in the election system.

Information Technology

- Support policies and resources to maintain resilient and secure technology systems that protect sensitive information, ensure continuity of operations and provide efficient access to public services.

Human Resources

- Consistently emphasize the need for both fairness and cost containment with new labor or employment law standards.
- Ensure cities retain control over hiring, retaining, disciplining, and dismissing employees, including autonomy on setting pay, benefits, and work conditions that fit their city's unique needs.
- Seek equal consideration of interests during the grievance and arbitration process.
- Support a public retirement system that provides good benefits to employees, helping them attract and keep workers while ensuring the system is affordable and simple to manage.

Public Contracting

- Advocate for policies that preserve and restore municipal local control, flexibility and decision-making authority.
- Support the simplification of state requirements to ensure procurement processes are accessible, transparent, and efficient to execute.

Taxation

- Protect local fiscal autonomy by ensuring local revenues remain accountable to local communities and preserving cities' ability to raise, retain, and utilize revenues needed to provide services, maintain infrastructure, and support economically vibrant communities.
- Support tax policies that recognize the differing needs, priorities, service levels, and fiscal capacities of Oregon's cities.
- Support reforms to Oregon's property tax system that improve the long-term sustainability, stability, and adequacy of local government revenues.
- Ensure that state-created tax exemptions, limitations, and other tax policy decisions do not disproportionately shift costs to local governments or undermine local service delivery.
- Protect and preserve state shared revenues as vital city resources that must be fully maintained and never reduced, eliminated, or redirected to the state or other governmental entities.



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INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC WORKS

Cities must have the capacity and resources to plan, finance, build, operate, maintain, and provide equitable access to essential infrastructure that delivers a high quality of life to all community members. Reliable infrastructure and public works are fundamental to public health, safety, economic vitality, environmental protection, and community livability. The LOC supports policies that will build safe, climate-resilient infrastructure and invest in sustainable cost-effective technologies that will serve cities into the future. This capacity strengthens resilience, provides economic opportunity, and supports thriving communities. Cities rely on ongoing, predictable state and federal investments to help meet essential infrastructure needs and maintain authority over these public assets, ensuring high-quality services are delivered as efficiently as possible.

The LOC will:

Drinking Water, Wastewater & Stormwater

- Support sustained federal and state funding for water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, including grants, principal forgiveness, low-cost financing, technical assistance, and ratepayer assistance.
- Ensure mandates consider cumulative compliance costs, household affordability, and the capacity of small and rural systems.
- Defend city authority to establish rates, fees, system development charges, and other financing methods necessary for reliable service.
- Apply the polluter pays principle to contaminates to prevent cost shifting to local ratepayers.
- Recognize that infrastructure investments protect public health and the environment while enabling housing, economic development, and community growth.

Drinking Water

- Protect municipal water rights and provide long-term certainty for cities to meet public safety (fire suppression) and future water and wastewater needs.
- Support water conservation, monitoring, forecasting, and supply planning.
- Support water reuse, storage, and other water supply strategies that improve reliability, resilience, and efficient use of existing water resources.

Wastewater & Stormwater

- Support cost-effective, science-based regulatory approaches, objective criteria, and best management practices when evaluating municipal environmental impacts.
- Develop policies with affected cities, accounting for point and nonpoint pollution sources, and using integrated watershed approaches.

Energy

- Advocate for energy policies that strengthen local energy resilience, advance energy efficiency, and optimize resource use to lower operational costs and environmental impacts.
- Support initiatives that expand resources for cities to plan for and implement energy resilience strategies, including, but not limited to, microgrids and battery storage systems.
- Support new energy generation and transmission capacity but not at the expense of local control over land use application review and siting processes.
- Ensure statewide energy policies consider city needs and limitations with technical resources and funding.
- Support state and local programs that provide technical assistance to help cities navigate funding opportunities for energy efficiency, local power generation, and community resilience.
- Protect local land-use and zoning authority to ensure energy generation and transmission projects align with community plans and local impacts.



Right of Ways (ROW)

- Support continued comprehensive municipal authority to manage ROW issues locally with innovative solutions.
- Oppose any legislation, mandate, policy or guidance that is intended to, or unintentionally, preempt municipal authority over the ROW.
- Protect cities' ability to charge franchise fees and establish agreements to support the management of their ROWs.
- Recognize the importance of municipal ROW to promote safe public access to sidewalks, streets and parks, efficient infrastructure management, fiscal responsibility, and accountability for those installing essential infrastructure.

Solid Waste & Recycling

- Preserve local authority and flexibility to manage services, rates, franchises, and service standards.
- Ensure state mandates and Recycling Modernization Act responsibilities are fully funded without shifting producer obligations or system costs to cities and ratepayers.
- Support efforts to require producers to reduce waste and bear the lifecycle costs of collecting, processing, and responsibly manage their products and packaging.
- Advocate for state programs that provide equitable funding, practical standards, and stable markets for recovered materials.
- Support safe, accessible, and adequately funded hazardous waste collection and disposal to protect public health, municipal employees, and local environments.

Telecommunications

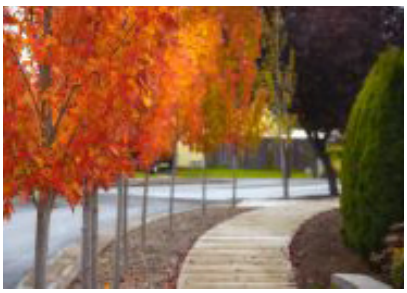
- Support legislation providing affordable access for all to reliable high-speed broadband, telecommunication and information services.
- Advance federal and state initiatives that grow telecommunications infrastructure, particularly in unserved and underserved regions of Oregon, and enhance services across the state.
- Ensure local governments retain the ability to develop or acquire their own broadband or telecommunications infrastructure.
- Oppose federal or state preemption over municipal franchising, regulatory and taxing authority over telecommunications service providers.

Transportation

- Prioritize safety in Oregon's transportation system, whether it's a city street, county road, state highway, or some other path.
- Protect and expand city revenue and funding options, including shared revenue from the State Highway Fund, to ensure cities have resources to meet their needs now and into the future.
- Strengthen Oregon's multi-modal transportation system to meet the needs of all whether they travel or move goods by car, bike, rail, or some other mode of travel – including expanding pedestrian, bike, and transit options, recognizing the environmental and health impact for Oregonians and their communities.
- Ensure local control of the management of city streets, including protecting a city's ability to manage right of ways, rides for hire, and emerging technology and trends.
- Apply a practical, cost cautious lens that considers the impact of deferred maintenance.
- Recognize that the movement of people and goods, generally, is vital to a healthy local and statewide economy.
- Enhance partnerships with federal and state governments to improve project delivery and program administration.







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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Cities are the engines of Oregon's prosperity, responsible for creating the conditions that allow communities to thrive, grow, and succeed. Through economic development, strategic land use planning, and investment in public amenities, cities help build vibrant, resilient communities where residents and businesses can flourish. Across Oregon, cities drive economic opportunity by attracting new businesses, supporting the expansion of existing employers, creating jobs, and fostering innovation. They also play a vital role in managing growth, ensuring development occurs in a way that is orderly, sustainable, and responsive to local needs. By balancing economic growth, housing, infrastructure, and quality of life, cities help create strong communities that are prepared for the opportunities and challenges of the future.

The LOC will:

Economic Development

- Protect the ability of cities to pursue locally determined economic development strategies that reflect their unique economic opportunities, community character, workforce needs, and long-term vision.
- Advocate for economic development tools, incentives, financing programs, and funding opportunities that are flexible, scalable, and responsive to the varying needs and capacities of Oregon's cities.
- Support the ability of cities to leverage local assets, industries, and regional strengths to promote local economic opportunity.
- Advocate for regulatory and permitting systems that are efficient, coordinated, predictable, and transparent, while reducing unnecessary barriers to local economic investment, expansion, redevelopment, and job creation.
- Support investments in public infrastructure that enable business growth, workforce development, freight movement, downtown revitalization, and long-term economic competitiveness.
- Encourage policies that facilitate effective public-private partnerships and remove unnecessary barriers that increase the cost, complexity, or uncertainty of economic development projects.
- Ensure local governments have meaningful involvement in state economic development decision-making processes and are recognized as essential partners in Oregon's economic success.

Land Use

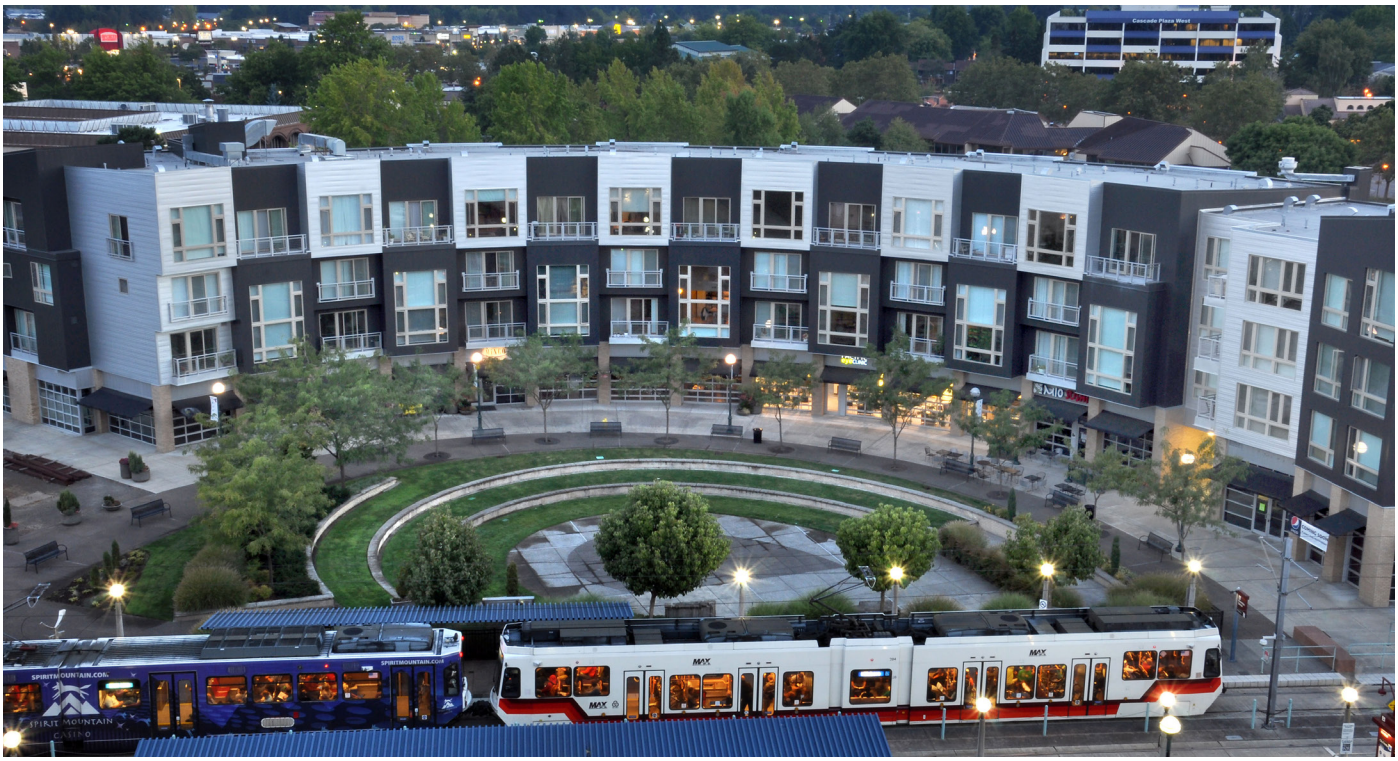
- Protect local authority and decision making in the land use process, including urban growth boundary expansion, annexation, and zoning authority.
- Enhance flexible land use tools and funding that allow cities to best plan for their communities' needs and implement land use changes.
- Balance the range of needs across the land use system including housing, economic development, public infrastructure, transportation, natural space, environmental needs, and public engagement.
- Advocate for data-driven and common-sense statutory changes that reduce the burden on cities while applying a practical lens to opposing land use changes.

Housing

- Support policies and resources that create sufficient, quality, and housing for diverse constituents (e.g., workforce, low income, seniors, disabled, and homeless).
- Support state policies that recognize the municipal role in planning, zoning, and permitting housing, while acknowledging that housing construction and financing are driven by private sector development, state and federal capital investment, and broader market and banking conditions.







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PUBLIC SAFETY & CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Cities must retain the flexibility and capacity to respond to community members in distress as an essential component of public safety. Livability, economic development, and a thriving civic life are hampered if people and businesses don't feel safe, requiring a public safety system that can respond to crime, fire, and other emergencies. Justice and accountability are threads that keep civil society, civil, and require cities to operate a public safety system which meets local needs and holds criminals accountable.

The LOC will:

Police

- Support resources that enable cities to hire, train, and retain the best officers for their communities, including full funding for the Oregon Public Safety Academy.
- Encourage programs that build positive community relationships with police, particularly in diverse communities.
- Support funding necessary upgrades and replacements for inadequate essential public safety infrastructure, including 9-1-1 and interoperability.

Fire

- Support innovations to efficiently and cost-effectively provide fire and emergency medical services to communities, including the use of technology and interlocal cooperation.
- Support investments in necessary infrastructure to conduct firefighting activities, including resources to recruit, hire, train, and retain qualified fire fighters and paramedics in sufficient numbers to respond to the local volumes for calls for service.

Courts

- Advocate for an accessible civil and criminal court system.
- Support court operations funding and retain the appropriate share of court fines and fees.
- Protect cities' ability to enforce city codes and ordinances that meet local needs





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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT & COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

Cities of all sizes and in all geographic regions are vulnerable to various types of natural disasters which result in significant personal, economic, and environmental destruction. All-hazards emergency management requires building and retrofitting communities to be resilient to damage resulting directly from a natural disaster, as well from secondary impacts such as smoke. Recovery is a long process which requires cooperation from federal, state, local, business, and non-profit partners. Preparing to recover begins with implementing resilience plans, training and positioning first responders at critical points to minimize damages and developing regional partnerships which focus on implementing local response/recovery plans, supported by regional, state, and federal resources.

The LOC will:

- Support technical assistance and resources for community sustainability and resilience planning and implementation, including resources to identify, plan and build infrastructure hardening.
- Ensure cities can improve defensible space in and around the w ildland urban interface, as well as the ability to expand building code requirements that create resiliency.
- Support programs focused on addressing the immediate post-disaster needs of people and businesses with minimal administrative burden.



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COMMUNITY NEEDS

Cities are at the forefront of meeting community needs and addressing crises that their communities face, which includes providing resources like open space in the form of parks, community access and education in the form of libraries, and resources for those in crisis like behavioral health services, shelter, and rehousing. While cities may choose to step up to fill critical community health needs, these non-traditional municipal services must remain locally driven choices rather than unfunded state mandates.

The LOC will:

Behavioral Health

- Support resources for cities that voluntarily choose to provide behavioral health programs and services or partner with local public safety agencies to address the community impacts of a strained system.
- Recognize that behavioral health care is a foundational, historic responsibility of counties and the state; support a strong, county-led statewide system while ensuring cities receive assistance when stepping in to fill local service gaps.

Homelessness

- Advocate to maintain and increase available resources to support sheltering efforts, safe parking, emergency shelter, transitional shelter, behavioral health beds, and permanent supportive housing.
- Support policies that allow cities to have the resources and flexibility to regulate public spaces in a way that supports all members of their community.

Libraries

- Support funding and programs that enable libraries to remain open and accessible to serve their community.
- Recognize libraries as vital community resources to support social and economic benefits, including as a key resource to connect community members to anti-poverty resources.

Parks & Recreation

- Support funding for affordable and accessible parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services which meet local needs.
- Advance policies and regulations which maintain or strengthen recreational immunity protections.





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POLICY & PRIORITY SETTING PROCESS

Processes that Support the OMP

The Oregon Municipal Policy (OMP) provides an overview of key principles and policies that guide the LOC's advocacy work. As a static document, the OMP is not intended to be the only guidance from LOC members to LOC staff. The processes outlined below, coupled with LOC bylaws, augment the OMP.

Priority Setting

The LOC must set legislative priorities to strategically advance solutions for Oregon's cities. This work is led by the LOC policy committees on a biennial basis.

The LOC policy committees support a portfolio of issues and use the information in the OMP, coupled with the understanding of the political landscape and current needs for cities, to identify a targeted set of priorities to advance to the LOC membership. The LOC membership participates in setting LOC priorities by voting on their city's top priorities coming out of all LOC policy committees.

Once all cities have had the opportunity to vote, the LOC staff prepare recommendations on priorities to the LOC Board of Directors. The board reviews the recommended priorities, including an opportunity to amend, and ultimately adopts the LOC legislative priorities. These efforts are purposefully timed to align with Oregon's long legislative session. The LOC Board may amend priorities, as needed, over the next two years prior to setting the next set of priorities.



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Policy Review

As a high-level guiding document, the OMP may not address specific or emerging issues. The LOC may need to engage in issues that are not defined by the OMP but will use one of the pathways below.

Policy Committee Pathway: If LOC staff are aware of policy matters that do not rise to the level of a priority for a policy committee, staff may seek a policy statement to be endorsed by the relevant committee. In those cases, provided the issue is not time-sensitive, the LOC Board will have the opportunity to approve the recommended statement from a policy committee. That statement will then guide how the LOC engages on that matter. If the issue is time-sensitive, staff will instead utilize the process outlined in the time-sensitive pathway.

LOC Staff Pathway: There may be times when the relevant policy committee has not engaged on a specific issue. In those instances, staff may still draft a policy statement and follow the pathway above without engagement from a policy committee.

Time-Sensitive Pathway: Responsiveness is key to political strength. On rare occasions – typically during fast-moving legislative sessions – the LOC must react to policy proposals within days. To navigate these time-sensitive matters, staff convenes an advisory legislative committee to offer counsel to the LOC Executive Director and Legislative Director.

Appointed by the LOC Executive Director, this committee includes the LOC Board President, representation from policy committee leadership, the Oregon Mayors Association, the Oregon City/County Management Association (city manager), all recognized caucuses, and any additional members chosen at the executive director's discretion. As the committee is purely advisory in nature, the executive director makes the final decision on the pathway forward after reviewing the input provided by staff and committee members.





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